

FIRE PREVENTION MESSAGE

Compiled by the

INIERAGENCY WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT TEAM (IWMT)

April 13, 2006

“Do your part. Don’t let a wildfire start!”

Every year *wildfires* cause major environmental, social and economic damages. They put timber, wildlife habitat, homes and even lives at risk. Over the past 16 years from 1990 – 2005 over six million acres have burned in the southwest including Arizona, New Mexico and West Texas. During that time period, New Mexico has had 28,325 fires and burned some 3,281,400 acres. Half of those fires were human-caused, with the majority of these being caused by improperly extinguished campfires.

“Do your part. Don’t let a wildfire start!” There are many things you can do to help reduce the risks of all types of human-caused fires. Some of the precautions that you can use to ensure a safe and enjoyable outdoor experience are explained below.

Stay Informed About Fire Conditions. Always be sure to check for specific fire regulations and restrictions for an area where you plan to go. In New Mexico and Arizona restrictions are posted at the following website:

http://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc/information/firerestrictions/restrictions_closures.htm

Build a Safe Campfire:

- Build campfires away from overhanging branches, steep slopes, rotten stumps, logs, dry grass, and leaves.
- Pile any extra wood away from the fires.
- Keep plenty of water handy and have a shovel for throwing dirt on the fire if it gets out of control.
- Keep the campfire small. A good bed of coals or a small fire surrounded by rocks gives plenty of heat.
- Scrape away litter, duff, and any burnable material within a 10-foot-diameter circle. This will keep a small campfire from spreading.
- Be sure your match is out. Hold it until it is cold.
- Never leave a campfire unattended. Even a small breeze could quickly cause the fire to spread.

Make Sure the Campfire is OUT COLD:

- Drown the fire with water. Make sure all embers, coals, and sticks are wet.
- Move rocks---there may be burning embers underneath.

- Stir the remains, add more water, and stir again. Be sure all burned material has been extinguished and cooled.
- If you do not have water, use dirt. Mix enough soil or sand with the embers.
- Continue adding and stirring until all material is cooled.
- Feel all materials with your bare hand. Make sure that no roots are burning.
- Do not bury your coals---they can smolder and break out later.

Smoke in Fire Safe Areas.

- If smoking is permitted outdoors, smoke in a 3-foot area cleared of vegetation or other flammable material. Then dispose of your cigarette in an ash tray.
- Use your ashtray while in your car; don't throw cigarettes out the window.

Use Fireworks Safely.

- Never allow children to play with or ignite fireworks.
- Only light fireworks on a smooth, flat surface away from the house, dry leaves, and flammable materials.
- Never try to relight fireworks that have not fully functioned and keep a bucket of water in case of a malfunction or fire.
- For local ordinances and bans, check with the local jurisdiction before using fireworks.
- The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to attend a public fireworks display.

Open Burning.

- Know your county's outdoor burning regulations. Unlawful burning is a punishable offense.
- Consider the alternatives to burning, such as composting.

Dispose of Charcoal Briquettes Appropriately. After using the burning charcoal briquettes soak the coals with lots of water; stir them and soak again. Be sure they are out--cold! Carefully feel the coals with your bare hands to be sure.

Use Spark Arresters.

- If off-road vehicle use is allowed, internal combustion equipment requires a spark arrester.
- Many other types of equipment are required to have spark arresters as well, such as chain saws, portable generators, cross-country vehicles, and trail bikes, to name a few, especially if used in or near grass, brush, or wooded areas.
- To make sure that the spark arrester is functioning properly, check with the dealer.

Use Lanterns, Stoves, and Heaters Safely.

- Keep stoves, lanterns and heaters away from combustibles.
- Never use stoves, lanterns and heaters inside a tent, trailer or camper.
- Be sure all lanterns, stoves, and heaters are cool before refueling.
- Place them on the ground in a cleared area to fill them. If fuel spills, move the appliance to a new clearing before lighting it.

- Recap and store flammable liquid containers in a safe place.
- Always read and follow instructions provided by the manufacturer.

Create Defensible Space around your Home.

This fire prevention message was compiled by the Interagency Wildfire Management Team (IWMT). The IWMT was formed in April 1996 in the wake of the Dome Fire, initially to address recovery actions that needed to take place that fiscal year. Since then its scope and membership have grown. The IWMT serves as a crosscutting team to identify, discuss and coordinate issues pertaining to wildfire mitigation and management in the Los Alamos area. The emphasis of the team is to take hands-on action needed to protect human life, improve fire-fighting safety, improve firefighting access, protect property, and maintain forest health. On this 10th anniversary of the Dome Fire, we would like to take some time to help educate the public about the dangers of wildfire. We know that prevention is the key to reducing the number of human-caused fires. Even though northern New Mexico has a very high occurrence of lightning, the main causes of wildfires are campfires, carelessness and escaped debris burning.

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